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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MIDDLE EAST, AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, EU,  
U.S.;BERLIN

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Die Welt and Tagesspiegel opened with reports that the U.S. economy is recovering. Sueddeutsche headlined: "Pensioners must Expect No Increase in Their Pensions Next Year," while Frankfurter Allgemeine opened with a story on the NATO report dealing with the air strikes against two fuel trucks near Kunduz on Sept. 4. Editorials centered on the most recent unemployment rate and on the NATO report on the air strike near Kunduz. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute opened with a report on the new ministers taking office, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a report on the EU summit in Brussels.

- [1](#)2. (Middle East) Secretary Clinton's Visit

Under the headline "In the circle of standstill," Sddeutsche editorializes that " Secretary Clinton will not be able to change the fact that peace is not on the agenda in the Mideast at the moment.... The mistrust between Israel and the Palestinians has reached a level which will require more than a U.S. secretary, who discovered the

Mideast conflict nine months after she took office."

13. (Afghanistan) U.S. Strategy, NATO Report on Air Strikes

Financial Times Deutschland (10/30) dealt with the future U.S. Afghanistan strategy and opined under the headline: "From a Magician

To a Hesitator," that "Barack Obama keeps putting off a final decision on the future Afghanistan strategy. His indecisiveness is dangerous because it strengthens the Taliban and discourages the allies. For more than eight years, the United States has waged a war in Afghanistan - and is about to lose it. In this respect, Barack Obama's deliberateness is wrong. He must make up his mind. It is true that he inherited the difficult situation in Afghanistan from his predecessor but he is responsible for his hesitation. Thus far, the allies have tried to achieve much with too little. Irrespective of what Barack Obama will decide: He must bring means and purpose into accordance and clearly say what he wants. But primarily he must do one thing: make up his mind."

ARD-TV's Tagesthemen (10/29) broadcast the following commentary: "A

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touch of Vietnam has covered Afghanistan. It will not be that easy to show the Taliban their limits. And it is becoming increasingly questionable whether the Taliban can be defeated militarily at all.

The international debate over the air strikes the Bundeswehr requested near Kunduz, demonstrates how questionable military activities against the Taliban have become. The United States has at least begun to develop new strategies. Political and economic initiatives are being given greater weight in Washington, too. This is good. But it is high time that Germany and Europe take part in finding a political solution to the conflicts; we should not leave this to the United States alone. For the new German government this issue must be on the top of the agenda. Mr. Westerwelle, Mr. zu Guttenberg, please take over!"

Regional daily Landeszeitung of Lneburg (10/30) judged: "The military salute that President Obama paid to the coffin of a fallen U.S. soldier in Afghanistan is honorable. With this gesture, the U.S. president is ending his predecessor's degrading hide-and-seek game about the costs of the war. But Obama's salute does not replace a real policy. Despite the latest bloodshed in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Obama is content with a policy of symbols instead of approving a new Afghanistan strategy. The change of strategies in Afghanistan demanded by General McChrystal is warranted: maximum protection of the population from the Taliban, which, however, can only be achieved by an increase in forces. If, at the same time, the Pakistani army is able to crush the Taliban in the country instead of dispersing them, the region could be stabilized."

Under the headline: "General McChrystal Must Go," Die Welt (10/30) opined: "Colonel Georg Klein, who ordered an air strike against two kidnapped fuel tankers near Kunduz two months ago, acted militarily correctly. Klein's commander, General Schneiderhan, said that this

is what the confidential report of the ISAF said. But among those who jumped to conclusions is General Stanley McChrystal. His supreme commander, President Obama, will meet Chancellor Merkel on Monday.

Then the chancellor will have the opportunity to tell Obama that an ISAF commander has to be loyal to his forces. McChrystal missed his chance to show this loyalty. The ISAF report now seems to emphasize which consequences such an attitude could have. The Bundeswehr needs a new boss in Afghanistan. General McChrystal should go. He is ready to step down."

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine (10/30), "General Schneiderhan comes to the conclusion that the air strikes against the two fuel trucks were appropriate in view of the situation that day. At least

he understands that the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan is not in a computer

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simulation but in an undeclared war which its opponents want to make as dirty as possible. If Germany wants to rule out the possibility of civilians being killed, then it must discontinue its involvement. There has never been a war without accidents, misconceptions, civilian and military victims."

Mass-tabloid Bild Zeitung of Hamburg (10/30) opined: "Those who want

to know what the leadership of the Bundeswehr thinks, need only listen to the Bundeswehr's chief of staff, General Schneiderhan. His bureaucratic lingo is a mockery to the 68 NATO soldiers who lost their lives in Afghanistan this month. It was one of the bloodiest months for NATO since the beginning of the war. The Afghan government - our partner - uninhibitedly falsified elections, and Taliban terrorist bombs went off all over the country. In the United States and in the UK, people heatedly argue about the escalation, but only here in Germany do we talk about this war as if it were an administrative problem. New Defense Minister zu Guttenberg has a lot to do. Afghanistan needs a plan, a vision. But first of all, zu Guttenberg should demand that his staff speak in clear language, and use words that explain instead of hushing things up."

Regional daily Heilbronner Stimme (10/30) noted: "Even the newest details of the NATO investigative report do not disperse the fog of war. Bundeswehr chief of Staff, General Schneiderhan, has presented partial results to the public, which - and it is no surprise - exonerate Colonel Klein. Other facts of the confidential report remain secret. Is that a coincidence? The majority of people who are now raising their voices only know minute details of the report. But one thing is clear: the new Defense Minister zu Guttenberg would be well-advised to quickly end his predecessor's camouflage tactics."

Köln Stadt-Anzeiger (10/30) observed: "Yesterday's appearance of Bundeswehr Chief of Staff, General Schneiderhan was at best,

bizarre.

Germany's highest-ranking soldier talked about a NATO report without saying what was in the report. And he drew a conclusion which, according to what we know, could hardly have led to his conclusion.

It is honorable that Schneiderhan backs his fellow soldier. Some say he should have done so much earlier. In the first week after the incident, he remained silent probably under pressure from former Defense Minister Jung. But it will be of no use if assessments replace facts."

Regional daily Augsburger Allgemeine (10/30) had this to say: "Since the report is secret there is still too much room for interpretation. That is why it would be welcome if the great doubters of the

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Alliance would put everything they have on the table. Only then will all the unfounded and malicious suspicions come to an end."

#### 14. (Iran) Nuclear Program

Under the headline "Iranian riddle," Frankfurter Allgemeine (10/30) editorialized: "At worst, Iran wants to provoke the world by refusing to compromise and enriching uranium itself-and moving closer to a nuclear bomb. A more hopeful thesis is that the regime is looking for a way out of the nuclear dispute without losing its face. The notoriously disunited group of six must now make a decision as to which interpretation is right as Iran continues to make demands. Optimists will say that the Iranian leadership had to respond to internal critics. Skeptics only need to refer to the fact that Iran has pretended to reach out many times before."

Frankfurter Rundschau (10/30) opined: "A compromise was arduously reached. Tehran now agrees to search for a compromise on that basis. At least, Iran made a move on the matter. The matter is gambling for time, working against UN embargos on importing fissile material. And an internal power struggle. However, the P5 plus one are also involved in power struggles. This does not make it easier." Stuttgarter Zeitung editorialized: "The West and Iran are dependent on each other. That is why one has to accept Tehran's basic right to enrich uranium, and, at the same time, make offers for the construction of advanced refineries in order to help the country. In addition, President Obama must link his dream of a nuclear-free world with the concrete goal of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East by giving all countries in the region U.S. security guarantees. Then peace would be closer."

#### 15. (EU) Summit Meeting, EU President

All media (10/30) carry lengthy reports on the EU summit in Brussels, highlighting that the "EU rejects Tony Blair as president," (Sddeutsche headline) and that "Europeans fight over money for climate protection" (FT Deutschland). Other headlines noted: "Left dupes Blair" (Spiegel Online), "Socialists stop Blair" (FT Deutschland), and "Blair fails because of the Socialists" (Frankfurter Rundschau).

Under the headline "Blair's short dream," Sddeutsche (10/30) editorialized: "It was foreseeable that Tony Blair would fail at his

ambition to become EU Council president.... It has always been an odd idea to promote someone to the chair of the EU Council whose country is opposed to the core projects of the EU. He has also obstructed the EU reform efforts whenever possible. This disqualified Blair right  
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from the start for an office that is supposed to promote integration. Making Blair the president would have meant setting the fox to keep the geese. Europe's Social Democrats have also realized this and stopped their party ally from London."  
Deutschlandfunk (10/29) radio remarked: "It could have been a summit of relief at which the necessary personnel decisions were made and the years-long battle over a more efficient EU and the institutional navel-gazing came to an end. However, we are not yet there.... The spirit of Czech President Klaus is looming over Brussels, hopefully for only one last time... It is indeed too early to make decisions on the future leading personnel. No serious candidate would put his hat in the ring as long as the Czechs have not ratified the Lisbon Treaty and reform of the EU has not become reality."

Under the headline "Climate Chancellor on collision path," Spiegel Online (10/30) editorialized: "Merkel blocks financial promises on climate protection at the EU summit in Brussels. The chancellor is gaming away a great opportunity and risks allowing the failure of the world climate summit in Copenhagen that scientists and environmentalists have all their hopes pinned on. She was once celebrated as climate chancellor and an important advocate for climate policies. Now, it could be Merkel, above all, who delivers the deathblow to the global climate negotiations by way of a shortsighted EU policy... If even the Europeans, who always praise themselves as pioneers in climate policy, hesitate, the U.S. and China will not make a move at all. The Copenhagen summit threatens to fail because rich and poor countries are blocking each other. This failure could set back global climate protection efforts by years. Merkel could play an important role in the decision-making of the EU council. If the EU fails to make financial commitments because of her, it would increase the notion that the West is not ready to go forward in climate protection. It may be that the Chancellor was tired from the coalition negotiations in which every euro was fought over. She might be thinking about the billions she has to come up with for tax cuts. And she is probably still busy with the giant stimulus packages to help banks and big companies. Perhaps there is now no money left over to save the world? ... The

German chancellor has an enormous opportunity to show greatness compared with President Obama. She could show him how to leave behind national small-mindedness and make decisions that need to be explained at home. Merkel still has the opportunity to do something for all

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people.... Obama gathered a fabulous environmental team around him and incorporated environmentally-friendly elements in the economic stimulus programs. But as a global player he must now make sure that the whole world embarks on a green course. The U.S. has been asked to become a leading nation, but the country does not deliver."

Schwäbische Zeitung (10/30) commented: "Will EU leaders have the courage to nominate a strong candidate like Tony Blair who can negotiate in their name with the powerful people in the world? Or will they install a pleasant clown as president, who will not be able to compete? These questions are important concerning Europe's power. Only if the leaders are prepared to stand back and allow somebody to coordinate their efforts will the community reach a more united position."

#### 16. (U.S.) Economic Recovery

All papers (10/30) reported that the U.S. economy has recovered from the recession and cited President Obama's Chief Economic Advisor Christina Romer, as having said: "We are seeing a turnaround." Several papers reported that this is also good news because Germany, as an export-driven economy, can also profit from this recovery. Financial Times Deutschland headlined: "United States Escapes From the Recession," while Die Welt said: "United States leaving Recession Behind." Sueddeutsche headlined: "Recession In the United States is Over," and wrote that the U.S. GDP "has surprisingly increased by 3.5 percent in the third quarter."

Financial Times Deutschland (10/30) judged in an editorial: "Reservation, despite the good economic data, is justified. As nice as it is that the U.S. economy has overcome its trough, we should all be aware of the danger of a new setback. The strong economic growth in the third quarter is partly due to the economic stimulus program launched by the government, including the cash-for-clunkers program, which the U.S. copied from Germany. In view of the uncertain prospects, however, it would not be unwise to prepare a new economic stimulus program to be able to react quickly if the economy begins to fall into recession again."

Under the headline: "Increased Growth Does Not Mean Normalcy," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (10/30) argued: "This is good news from America...and foremost a success for President Barack Obama. His courageous decision to launch a giant economic stimulus program and to accept a record deficit has paid off. But there is also bad news.

This recovery is everything but sustainable, and those who pretend that the world has returned to normalcy are living dangerously. Currently nothing is normal. The economy is on the drip of the state. It is indispensable that U.S. households make greater savings in the

future. This will dampen the growth of consumption. That is why it is unclear when the central banks and governments will be able to phase out their life saving measures for the global economy."

"Risk Patient' is the headline in Handelsblatt (10/30), which opined:

"The U.S. economy is growing again. But it is much too early to be

euphoric. Doped up to its neck with cheap money fresh off the printing press of the U.S. central bank and economic stimulus programs of the White House, the U.S. economy achieved considerable economic

growth in the third quarter. Unfortunately, there are a few drops of bitterness: "The U.S. economy will be unable to keep this pace. The

labor market, financial system and real estate problems have not yet been resolved. The prospects, however, are clearly better than they

were six months ago. Much will now depend on how much the Fed will be

willing to throttle the permanent infusion with cheap money. Trade and industry will need cheap money for a long time to come, to clear

the debris from the crisis. But if the turnaround comes too late or

is too vehement, a new recession will be looming. In this situation,

Europe cannot expect the United States to become a stable economic engine again."

According to Berliner Zeitung (10/30), "the recession in the United

States has ended and gives the world reason for hope. But the Americans will not be able to continue the economic recovery

because, first, the cash-for-clunkers program will expire; second,

unemployment is on the rise, and, third, the Americans are still so indebted that

they must increase their savings. All this will slow down consumption

in the coming months. Nevertheless, the U.S. economy will not collapse again because stocks are almost empty and companies will

try to fill them again. This will drive production. But this will not be

enough to create a boom for the rest of the world. It is up to other

countries to organize this themselves."

MURPHY